

SPECIAL EDITION

WESTERN REGION SECURITY OFFICE

APRIL 2001

For Parents: How to teach personal safety to your child



Scary Statistics

Here are some statistics that you should be aware of:

- * One out of every four girls will be sexually abused by age 18
- * One out of every eight boys will be sexually abused by age 18
- * 80 - 90% of offenders are family members or are someone close to the family
- * Sexual abuse is devastating for all victims
- * Children can prevent or stop sexual abuse in some cases

WHAT SHOULD I TEACH MY CHILD?

Four elements are important to children's ability to protect themselves from sexual abuse:

1. Knowledge and ability to identify sexual abuse.
2. A sense of being able to control their own bodies in exchanges of physical affection.

3. Assertive techniques for telling someone not to touch them.
4. Confidence in an adult who will believe and protect them when told about an incident.

YOU MAY WANT TO TELL YOUR CHILD THE FOLLOWING:

- "Your body is your own. You have the right to the privacy of your body in dressing, bathing, and sleeping."
- "People touch each other in many ways. Most touches are pleasant and okay. Some touches, like tickling, might be confusing because they start out okay, but become not okay when the person won't stop. Some touches are hurtful and not okay. If you wonder whether a touch is okay or not, ask someone you trust."
- * "If anyone touches you in a way you do not like or understand, or asks you to touch them in a 'not okay' way, take action."

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- * "You have our permission to say 'no' or 'Don't touch me that way'."
- * "You have our permission to tell a trusted adult. Tell Mom or Dad, Grandma or Grandpa, your friend's mother, your teacher, the counselor, nurse, principal, police or any other adult you trust to help you."
- * No adults should touch your private body parts - your penis, vagina, breasts, and buttocks - except for health reasons. If an adult touches you and says, "This is our secret," we want you to tell anyway. That kind of secret is not okay.
- * "You are not to blame if an adult touches you on the private parts of your body. The adult should know better. IT IS NOT YOUR FAULT."
- * "We will believe what you tell us. We will protect you."

WHAT ELSE SHOULD I DO TO PROTECT MY CHILD?

- * Always know where your child is and whom he/she is with. Check out babysitters and be cautious about where your child stays overnight.
- * Listen to your child. Listen to what he/she is *NOT* saying. Simple statements like "I don't want Grandpa to come for Thanksgiving", or "The babysitter broke my bottom," should be discussed further.
- * Define family boundaries, such as all family members must wear some clothing and must respect individual rights to privacy in dressing, bathing, or sleeping.
- * Teach proper names for body parts from earliest years on. This gives your child language for understanding and telling, and demystifies sexual abuse.

- * Periodically review personal safety as a total family. Remind the children they have your permission to tell if abuse happens to them. If the first person they tell does not seem to believe them, they should tell another, and another, until someone takes action.
- * Check to see if your children have internalized your teaching by asking them "what if" questions. Listen closely to their answers.
- * If abuse should happen to your child, respond in a calm, matter-of-fact way, and reassure the child he/she has done nothing wrong.
- * Always believe your child.

ADDITIONAL CHILD SAFETY WHAT YOU CAN DO AS A PARENT:

- * Find safe play areas for your child.
- * Decide where it's safe for your child to walk. Teach your child to follow that route.
- * Set a good example for your child in your *OWN* walking and driving habits. Be a "Wary Driver".
- * Work to set up a pedestrian training program.
- * Work to establish school patrols.
- * Get help from your PTA, schools, youth groups, police and the community.

TEACH YOUR CHILD TO BE A "WARY WALKER"

- * Always stop at the edge of the street.
- * Look left, right, then left again before entering the street. Make sure your child stops and looks again if there are parked cars at the edge of the street.

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* Look over your shoulder for traffic coming from behind. Look ahead for traffic.

* Have your child enter the street only if NO moving cars are seen.

* Have your child cross "warily" by watching both sides while crossing.

* If a moving car is spotted at all, have your child wait for it to pass. Then start the search for moving cars again.

REMEMBER: CROSSWALKS AND STOP SIGNS ARE NOT ALWAYS SAFE PLACES.

MANY DRIVERS DON'T STOP.

YOUR CHILD MUST:

"SEE AND BE SEEN" BY DRIVERS.



Information provided courtesy of the Monroe, WA Police Department

TO HELP PROTECT YOUR CHILD:

1. Don't let your child wear clothing with his or her name on it. A child will tend to pay attention to anyone calling him or her by name.

2. Videotape and take photos of your child two or three times a year.

3. Do not leave your child unattended while shopping or visiting friends. Never leave a child alone in a vehicle.

4. Make sure your child checks in with you before anywhere with anyone.

5. Make sure your child learns his or her address and phone number at an early age.

6. If your child is a latchkey kid, make sure they know to keep the doors and windows locked, and to never let anyone in the house, not even someone claiming to be a police officer or fireman.

7. Have your child fingerprinted.

8. Make sure your child knows to scream and run if approached in an alarming way by anyone. Your child should be taught to ALWAYS tell you immediately if he or she is approached by a stranger who asks for help, offers candy/gifts, or frightens him/her in anyway. Your child should know to make you aware of anytime he or she feels uncomfortable with ANYONE.

9. Keep a growth chart of your child; know his or her height.

10. Teach you child to make a collect call, and to begin with "*Operator...I'm in trouble; I need your help*"

Information provided by Child Search
Houston, TX